

## CAN STALIN HAVE A SUCCESSOR?

### *Why the Dictator's Shoes Cannot Be Filled*

PAUL WILLEN

THE developments since Stalin's death have made it abundantly clear that Malenkov's immediate installation as Premier did not settle—as so many thought it would—the question of the “succession,” so hotly discussed at the time. The amnesty granted to prisoners of certain categories; the about-face on the Kremlin doctors; the strictures against one-man rule; the increased talk about the “rights of individuals”; the condemnation of the cult of heroes; the near-disappearance of Stalin's name from the Soviet press; the apparent resurgence of Beria's power coupled with the failure of Malenkov to emerge as the dominant figure in the troika which is supposed to rule Russia today—these startling events have compelled many to recognize that Stalin's death created enormous problems for the Soviet regime which were not solved by the juggling of titles and positions in the top hierarchy.

But even more striking indications of the

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A TOTALITARIAN regime without a totalitarian leader is unprecedented in modern history. But as yet Stalin has had no heir, as the events of the four months following his death have made clear; to date, we have the triumvirate of Malenkov, Beria, and Molotov, with the single successor to the dictator still to emerge. But we await a development that may not happen at all. What if there will never be a successor to Stalin? In this article PAUL WILLEN supports just this thesis, suggesting that the present uneasy situation must continue and may indeed lead to conflicts that will threaten the very foundation of Soviet rule. Mr. Willen, who was born in New York City in 1928, is a graduate of Oberlin College, and at present working toward his doctorate at the Columbia Institute of Russian Studies. He has contributed articles on Russian drama and architecture to the State Department magazine, *Problems of Communism*.

vast changes which the death of Stalin has brought about are to be found in the realm of foreign policy. The exchange of wounded prisoners in Korea; the sudden softening of Soviet diplomatic behavior; the release of William Oatis; the signing of the long-postponed Rumanian-Yugoslav treaty regarding control of the Danube; and the general effort at the establishment of a temporary *modus vivendi* with the West which has culminated in the Korean truce—this train of events has made it fairly apparent that the latest Soviet “peace offensive” was not an offensive at all, but an earnest attempt at establishing the lines in the cold war.

Clearly, something new is in the air, something not to be ascribed merely to the diabolical ingenuity of Kremlin strategists in confusing and bewildering their Western opponents. On the contrary, it is the Kremlin that seems to be recoiling from a great shock, and attempting, through a series of maneuvers and concessions, to establish a temporary stability. The great shock was Stalin's death; and the far-reaching maneuvers are a reflection of the degree to which his death has unsettled some of the fundamental power relations in the USSR.

Following the “panic” that seized sections of Soviet society after Stalin's death, the new rulers have slowly been adjusting themselves to the special tasks and problems of the first of the modern totalitarian states to exist without a supreme, all-powerful leader. For as the months pass it becomes increasingly clear that what many observers had suspected long before Stalin's death is true: Stalin cannot have a “successor.”

STALIN, we should remind ourselves, did not derive his practically unlimited power from the offices he occupied or the official



titles he assumed. Up until 1941 he held no official post in the governmental structure at all. Nor was his extraordinary authority based upon an abstract theory of leadership, a legal principle sanctioned either by Russian history or Marxist tradition, or by his claim to the title of co-architect, with Lenin, of the Bolshevik revolution. None of his predecessors—Lenin no more than Nicholas II—had possessed the kind of power he did. *The roots of Stalin's kind of rule lay in the fact that it was under his aegis that the most enormous and oppressive state apparatus in human history was built; and that, in the most literal sense, he had become the deus of the machine.* His power cannot be separated from that of the machine which he himself so largely built. That machine was not originally his creation, but he got in on the ground floor and rose to prominence, in the early 1920's, as leader of it, and *earned* his ultimate power by expanding the machine to unprecedented dimensions and imposing upon it an equally unprecedented unity.

Stalin thus did not inherit Lenin's throne; nor was it "transferred" to him by decree. He took it in the course of one of the bitterest political struggles of modern history. The very intensity of that struggle made Stalin's final victory that much more fundamental and his own personal authority that much greater in scope.

His authority over the nation as a whole developed, however, in the course of struggles outside the party, too. There was the collectivization of the peasants, the virtual enslavement of the working class, the destruction of the independent intelligentsia, and the great fight the new bureaucracy waged under Stalin's leadership to gain a working economic base for itself by the industrialization of the country. Stalin also conducted the great purges by which his, the younger, section of the machine eliminated the older sections. Whatever personal popularity he may have had among the Russian people he gained only by his leadership in the repulse of the German armies after 1942.

During the thirty years of Stalin's rule a whole country was overturned, not once, but several times. Throughout, he was at the helm of the social movement that gained most by these vast and cataclysmic developments: the power he accumulated was bound to be extraordinary, and the offices he held could not at all explain or describe this power. More appropriate were the terms in which he let himself be addressed: "the mightiest genius of history," "the coryphaeus of science," the leader "of all progressive mankind."

THESE are offices of a kind that neither Malenkov nor anyone else can ever hope to occupy. It is conceivable that efforts will be made to attach such labels to Malenkov, but their falsity will become immediately apparent, for they will not correspond to his place in Soviet life. For the deification of Stalin, if interpreted pragmatically and not literally, did have a certain validity. Stalin ruled over the machine which completely reordered and reworked every phase of Russian life, and his deification expressed the *actual working power-relationship that existed between Stalin and the Russian people, and, even more significantly, between Stalin and his own "close associates."* The cult of Stalin was not merely a means to please his undoubted vanity; it was also the chief way in which his subjects could express their acceptance of their total subordination to the bureaucracy, and the bureaucracy, in turn, its subordination to Stalin.

Stalin permitted his "close associates" to stand with him on Lenin's tomb several times each year; he permitted them to make relatively routine speeches at the party congresses. But the glory of the regime was always and invariably focused upon Stalin. The "associates" were kept anonymous and vague; they shone only in the reflected glory. This corresponded to the enormous gulf in power which, in actual fact, existed between Stalin and his "close associates."

The "associates" most certainly did exercise authority, but largely by virtue of their favor with Stalin. Stalin listened to them



all at Politburo meetings; but the final decision, the final responsibility, was always his alone. The power Malenkov enjoyed depended entirely upon Stalin's personal favor. Independently of Stalin he possessed nothing, and up to the day Stalin died he remained, essentially, one of "Stalin's men." Stalin could have had him killed—as he may have had Zhdanov killed in 1948—had Malenkov threatened his supremacy in any way. Up to the day Stalin died Malenkov remained *only* a bureaucrat in a country where everyone, except Stalin himself, was a bureaucrat in essence, holding a position defined by the office rather than by the man.

**T**HE situation in 1924, at the time of Lenin's death, was quite different. Lenin was the intensely popular (at least in the party) leader of the revolution. But Stalin was even then the boss of the party apparatus. As such, Stalin could boast—as no one was to be able to at the time of his own death—that he already enjoyed enormous independent authority. For several years he had been quietly building up his own machine, staffing it with men whose primary loyalty was to that machine and its master rather than to Lenin. Thus Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, is supposed to have remarked in 1927 that had Lenin lived he would already have been in a Stalinist prison. Stalin controlled an independent center of authority established by endless manipulations, patronage, and an early willingness to subordinate the increasingly abstract and unreal ideals of the revolution to considerations which the party bureaucrats were beginning to find more urgent: jobs, careers, security, position, prestige, ceremony. By 1924 Stalin was already much more than one of "Lenin's men." In 1924, the totalitarian state had yet to be born; a relative degree of separation of authority at the top levels was still possible. Today, however, the structure is complete. Independent centers of power in the Soviet Union's ruling machine have been unthinkable for twenty years.

Malenkov heads but one of the depart-

ments of an apparatus over the whole of which Stalin held full and final authority. Malenkov does not come to power with a new program, a new dynamism; he has nothing new to say, and represents nothing new. Nor are there any revolutionary ideas for him to suppress; no peasantry to collectivize; no industrialization to start; no bureaucracy to build; no deep or significant party split (at least not on the surface) to deal with. These, the "historic tasks" of the Stalin leadership, have already been done; his job is now to keep things running as before, to extend the victory already attained and clean up a few rough spots. Malenkov will not be faced, so far as we can tell now, with any enormous social challenge like that Stalin met, and in the overcoming of which by his own efforts he "earned" his own deification.

**"T**HERE is nothing so powerful," Victor Hugo wrote, "as an idea when its time has come." Stalin gained power in an age when the idea he represented so well—collectivist totalitarianism—could move millions of men and make history. In Russia today this "idea" is established, settled, respectable; it is embodied in an entire way of life.

Stalin took power during the "heroic" days of Bolshevism, a period from which a successful politician could emerge with the aura and glamor that revolutionary periods alone can bestow upon a man. That period, which could produce three men of such enormous dynamism and power as Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin, is long since over.

The legendary figures of every civilization are associated with periods of deep crisis. Perhaps the greatest crisis into which men are plunged is one which culminates in a great social revolution. The only man in modern history whose influence ranks with Stalin's is, as so many have observed, Napoleon, and it is not accidental that he too rose out of the ashes of a great social revolution. Both Stalin and Napoleon were able to harness the enormous social force unleashed by their respective revolutions. This fact explains their exceptional impact on history.



## II

STALIN was an extremely shrewd politician; and he recognized, unconsciously perhaps, that his great prestige was intimately connected with his role as the inheritor, if not of the ideals of the revolution, then at least of its inner dynamism. He himself sensed that his deification (which he encouraged) was a tribute not only, or literally, to his abilities, but also to the enormous impact of his rule. It would have been absurd to attempt to direct some of this adulation to any individual or group among his "close associates"; none of these had served prominently in the revolution, and most of them had not even begun to play major roles in Soviet life until the late 1930's, under the protection of his own shadow. Stalin must have sensed, too, that, much as he may have wanted to insure the continuity of his regime, he would jeopardize his own position were he to begin the "transfer" of power before his death. But it went deeper than that: he understood, master politician that he was, that at bottom he could not make a "successor" simply by naming one, and, if he were to have a real "successor," the man would have to traverse much the same road he had.

Many observers were impressed with the fact that at the 19th Party Congress last fall Malenkov read the report usually reserved for Stalin himself. But much of the fanfare (chiefly in the Western press) with which Malenkov was greeted before the Congress turned out to be rather stale copy when the Congress itself went into session. He read the report; but it proved to be a rather routine speech made in routine fashion, and very much, in its essential tone and spirit, like the reports delivered by Beria and Molotov. None of the three, in fact, said very much that might not have appeared in a *Pravda* editorial nearly any day in the week. The language, manner, and delivery of Malenkov's speech was also completely undistinguished.

In his book *Stalin*, Isaac Deutscher asserts the reason Soviet writing is so dull and methodical is that every bureaucrat wants

to imitate Stalin's style. There is some truth in this, but a major point is missed, namely, that compared with a *Pravda* editorial even Stalin's prose sounds extremely interesting, almost absorbing. Stalin's two contributions to the 19th Party Congress—on the "economic questions of socialism" and on the importance of "our foreign comrades"—contained the only interesting things said during the entire Congress, aside from some new factual data given by Malenkov. Stalin's contributions had interest not only because he presented a new slant on some theoretical questions, but also because the style, dull as it may have been, was eminently his own. The flatness, the didactic tone, the pedestrian crudeness, the feigned modesty so characteristic of all of Stalin's writings in the past, were as much in evidence as ever. Malenkov's speech, on the other hand, was devoid of a single individual touch.

Added to this, of course, was the fact that Stalin's speech had something new to say. Malenkov and the "close associates" continued to parrot the line of yesterday's *Pravda* editorial, much of it, in fact, contrary to Stalin's new theses. Had Stalin really taken Malenkov seriously as a "successor," would he have given him so ignominious—almost humiliating—a role at the 19th Party Congress? The "heir presumptive"—a parrot like the rest!

There is evidence to support our conjecture that Stalin did not think in terms of a "successor." A photograph published about a week after Stalin's death in *Pravda* portrayed Stalin, Mao, and Malenkov in earnest conversation. Harry Schwartz has shown in the *New York Times* that it was a scissors-and-paste job cut from a 1950 photograph of the signing of the Sino-Russian treaty. Apparently not a single photograph exists of Stalin and Malenkov together!

In his own struggle for power Stalin could use an authentic photograph of himself seated on a garden bench next to Lenin. Stalin must have understood the situation well enough to realize that should he die Malenkov would need some concrete evidence of his special closeness to Stalin. But apparently



nothing whatsoever was prepared for the emergency.

So little did Stalin think in terms of the "succession" problem that at the 19th Party Congress—which some observers interpreted as an event staged primarily to ease the passing on of power—certain organizational reforms were effected which made sense only so long as Stalin remained in complete control. It was generally recognized at the time of the Congress that the abolition of the Politburo and the creation of the broad and structurally meaningless Presidium signified a further centralization of power in the hands of a small group around Stalin. This extreme concentration of power was possible only when firmly held by an all-powerful leader. Once that leader was gone the reins on the top level would have to be loosened, power decentralized, and a somewhat larger unit of supreme power set up, more like the Politburo of ten years before—but without its central and decisive figure. And this is just what was done as soon as Stalin died.

### III

**B**UT there were other reasons, even more compelling, for Stalin's decision to adopt an "*après moi, le déluge*" attitude toward the succession. Just because he knew the importance to the totalitarian system as a whole of the principle of a single leader with undivided powers, he recognized that an "heir presumptive" would have jeopardized it—and him.

Only consider the fact that before Stalin's death the "succession" question was not once alluded to in the Communist press anywhere, inside or outside Russia! One pauses to digest this extraordinary fact. In all the thousands of Communist and Communist-controlled newspapers and magazines all over the world, not a single article ever appeared in which this topic was so much as hinted at. The explanation is not hard to find. The whole deification campaign presupposed everlastingness; how can one allow even the suggestion of the death of a "god"?

But just as we need not interpret Stalin's deification literally, so must we not interpret

literally the failure to discuss his mortality. The deification served definite political purposes. And just as the deification cult would have been made to look ridiculous by conjectures as to the death of the deity it invoked, so the political despotism which the deification expressed would have been shaken had its victims discussed possible political alternatives to Stalin.

"Will it be better, will it be worse?" would have been the first question. "Will my position be enhanced, or will it be threatened?" the second. Secretly, of course, all Communists wondered about these things, but kept it to themselves; the whole topic was essentially subversive. The moment an "heir presumptive" was definitely named, he would have become, inevitably, the rallying point for tendencies of opposition to Stalin's rule. Knowing, privately at least, that Stalin would die eventually, every bureaucrat would hurry to "come to terms" with the man who was to succeed him. The authority the "heir presumptive" would acquire as a result would make him so strong that he might begin, unwittingly, to take over certain functions reserved for Stalin—the role, for instance, of supreme arbiter in all differences among the ruling group. "Glory to the Great Stalin," the poster-makers would print, and then, hesitating a moment, add cautiously, "and his closest aide, Malenkov."

Detailed accounts of the struggle between Malenkov and Zhdanov in the 1940's have been written in an authoritative tone hardly justified by the paucity of available information. These lurid accounts of the bloody fight inside the Politburo elevate the Malenkov-Zhdanov conflict to a level of significance almost equaling that of the Trotsky-Stalin struggle of three decades earlier. Like most generals, these analysts are always ready for the last war. In one such account Stalin hardly appears at all; in actual fact, of course, not only did a referee preside over the Zhdanov-Malenkov struggle, but that referee also acted as an impresario. But Trotsky and Stalin had their fight out alone, without referee, judge, or anyone to interfere. It is important to remember this, for if



Malenkov back in 1948 had won his struggle against Zhdanov unaided, his position today would be that much stronger.

If Zhdanov did lose, apparently, it was primarily because Stalin himself decreed it so. We must recall that Zhdanov's political position was very strong in 1948. It was he who had been cutting down the intellectuals for several years running; it was he who bossed the new and spectacular Cominform. He might well have posed the kind of threat to Stalin's monolithic power that men like Zhukov posed in 1945. Zhukov could be exiled to the Crimea, but Zhdanov had to be disposed of more conclusively. In other words, we might credit Zhdanov's demise in 1948 not so much to Malenkov's crafty tactics as to the fact that Stalin himself had felt threatened.

#### IV

**T**HIS system, whereby any prospective successor was cut down the minute he thrust his head up a little too high, worked splendidly as long as Stalin remained alive, but it had to fall apart as soon as he died. His death has created not only a second "center of power," but a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth. No one knows just how widely power has been diffused, but that it has been diffused is obvious. Malenkov may be boss; but he cannot rule without Beria and Molotov. Kaganovich is given new authority; Bulganin enjoys great respect and power; Saburov, Mikoyan acquire prestige they did not previously enjoy. Shvernik is called up too; Zhukov is lifted to top rank again.

Everyone with a modicum of independent prestige is called upon to bolster the center. Such independent prestige as they have they won not because, but in spite of, the system they worked under. Stalin was powerful enough to rule without any "names" around him; he enforced a strict anonymity upon all his "close associates." How different things are with Malenkov, who cannot rule without "names," without the support of people who command a respect and authority in no sense dependent upon himself. Whereas Stalin could not tolerate men with

Zhukov's popularity, the new regime cannot survive without them.

In the twinkling of an eye everything has been transformed. A dozen or more men whose lives were once at the mercy of a single despot suddenly emerge as independent candidates for power. Malenkov is possibly the strongest, but the rest, allied in pairs, threes, and various other patterns, can wield considerable power and check the moves of the new dictator. Before a decision can be made, the leading men must confer, viewpoints must be reconciled, factions conciliated. The supreme arbiter is gone; only the machine remains.

A few among the more enlightened leaders may recognize the necessity of establishing a single supreme figure. To bring this about they may be willing to lift one of themselves—perhaps Malenkov—into special prominence—but without relinquishing that independence which Stalin's death suddenly thrust upon them. Thus, counter-pressures are automatically set up. The relative fluidity of relations among the top leaders is exhilarating and breeds hopes.

It is, of course, extremely difficult to predict the exact nature any struggle for power will assume; we know so very little about the nature of the interlocking Soviet directorates. But certain facts are fairly clear. The "close associates" served, not as ministers with exactly delineated spheres of power, but as trouble-shooters with overlapping functions that involved them in the workings of every part of the power apparatus. Malenkov is strong, but, as Professor Philip Mosely has noted, the party is no longer a clearly distinguishable organization, but merely one of the various belts by which the rulers transmit power down through the machine, its top membership consisting largely of leading officials in each field of activity with which the state is concerned. But who controls the state? Some thought that Molotov had the main control over the state apparatus, but now he has taken over Foreign Affairs. The military realm, does that belong to Bulganin? Perhaps; but the army, like everything else, is carefully pa-



trolled by the secret police. Beria's personal bailiwick? But the heads of internal security are party men as well, and Malenkov runs the party. At the same time it was Beria, the police chief, who was sent to the Caucasus a year ago to reorganize the party apparatus there. And both Beria—through the slave-labor camps—and Malenkov—in the aircraft industry during the war—have played prominent roles in industry itself. Bulganin has apparently had economic experience also.

The divisions, if they exist, are horizontal rather than vertical; each leader has "followers" in every major institutional hierarchy. Probably such a diffusion of power was one of the devices by which Stalin was able to maintain full and supreme mastery over his "associates."

Remember, too, that, the institutions over which these men nominally ruled during Stalin's lifetime had been established before they themselves appeared on the scene. Beria came to the police in 1938, well after its essential structure had been shaped; Malenkov took over the party apparatus long after it had ceased to operate as an independent political machine; Bulganin is new to the army. This rather peculiar system—so different from our ministerial arrangement—worked well as long as all these "trouble-shooters" were under the control of the man who had presided over the creation of each one of these institutions. Now he is dead, and it is interesting to see that, in the vast consolidation of ministries created after his death, a certain tendency toward ministerial responsibility can be detected; this possibly reflects an effort to build up independent centers of individual power.

## V

**T**O RESTORE the monolithic frame of Soviet power, the leadership principle would have to be restored. Hence an effort may possibly be made sooner or later to invest Malenkov, or someone else, with that special aura of infallibility which Stalin had had the right to claim for himself after so many years in power. To do this, the principle of

legitimacy may be invoked, and an effort made to convince the Soviet public of the direct connection between the new leader and the old tradition identified with Stalin.

Malenkov's scissors-and-paste photograph was the first suggestion that such plans were on foot. However, these first efforts appear to have been the result of an initial "panic" which gripped Soviet leaders after Stalin's death rather than of long-range plans.

At first Malenkov was desperate for that seal of legitimacy which the Stalinist system so systematically denied him heretofore. Legitimacy belonged to Stalin alone. His emergence from the deep revolutionary past was traced in song and story, while the past of his "close associates" was deliberately kept vague. The potential leading personalities were ruthlessly purged—either of their individuality or of their lives; only the stalwarts remained. As Pavlenko said in his Stalin-prize-winning novel, *Happiness*, "Heroism is not elemental, it must be organized."

The sudden expunging of Stalin's name from the Soviet press shows vividly the cynical spirit of the Stalin cult. Lenin's prestige, derived so largely from the moral authority he enjoyed among Bolsheviks, outlived him, and became, in fact, the object of an intense intra-party struggle. The swollen tributes paid to Stalin, on the other hand, were in recognition of the power he wielded, not expressions of genuine respect. Once he was dead—and unable to wield such power—these expressions inevitably lost much of their meaning.

It seems very unlikely that one important aspect of the special position accorded Stalin in Soviet propaganda—Stalin as "the great white father"—can be restored. This myth led the public mind to believe there is a division within the Soviet leadership as to "moral" leadership, a division which many in the West still believe in. The purity of the revolution—the dreams of October, the distant glories of the "last stage of Communism"—was thought to reside in Stalin, while the monstrous acts of the vast machine below—its perversions, its divergences from Marxism, its endless barbarities—were



thought to be the work of the anonymous "associates." These "close associates" kept the slave-labor camps operating while Stalin gave himself up to higher questions of ideology and theory. In actual fact, of course, no such division of responsibility existed; reliable evidence shows that as late as 1948 Stalin continued to play the central role in the management of the bureaucracy.

Clearly, Stalin could not attempt, in his lifetime, to "transfer" this special role and authority to one of his "technicians." To do so would have given the game away and exploded the very myth upon which so much of his popularity outside the machine itself depended. By merely suggesting that Malenkov was qualified to take his place, Stalin would have tacitly admitted that, in the end, all he had created in these thirty years was the machine, that its ideological heart had long ago ceased to beat. In any case, he chose not to destroy this myth; and so he took it with him to his grave. The "technicians" must carry on without it.

One has only to read Malenkov's funeral oration to see immediately how ill prepared he was to play an independent role, despite all the photographic skulduggery. It is a completely routine speech, lacking utterly in anything original, memorable, or individual, a speech that might have been delivered by a local party secretary. Stalin's 1924 oration over Lenin's dead body was, despite—or because—of its liturgical turn of phrase, at least original, introducing a new if vulgar and debased note into Bolshevism. The solemn, semi-religious vow, the tendency toward superstitious reverence, would soon furnish the style for a vast array of cults.

The post-Stalin leadership introduces nothing new; it can only preside over an enormous social organism the essential lines of which were laid down long ago. Its primary task, at the moment, is to calm, pacify, soothe, above all to stabilize. To achieve this the dynamic forward movement of the Stalin machine must, for the first time in its thirty-year history, be halted, and a partial retreat effected.

WITH Stalin's death the whip over the bureaucracy is gone. Its *collective* needs—so well attended to under Stalin's leadership—can no longer receive the attention they once did. Instead, the wishes of the individual bureaucrats—who want some relaxation in the relentless struggle to strengthen their domination at home and widen it abroad, who want longer vacations in which to enjoy the fruits of victories already won—must now be placated. Hence the efforts at partial rapprochement with the West and the about-face in the case of the "doctors' plot" at home.

But how far can this process go before the initiative passes from the Kremlin to the bureaucrats themselves? To rule successfully Malenkov must restore to the throne—if he can—its initiative as the expander and oppressor, the inaugurator of plans, and merciless persecutor of "enemies." Can the totalitarian system stand up under this reorganization of its patterns of leadership? Will factional struggles among independent bureaucratic centers on the upper levels begin to reflect deeper conflicts in the fabric of the system as a whole?

The test can come at any juncture that demands a bold and new decision. To negotiate peace in Korea is not such a test. Such a test will come when the people—accustomed to, or expecting, a liberalization—begin to take advantage of the lack of dynamic leadership at the top. Will there be leadership strong and undivided enough to restore complete order and oppression?

The struggle which goes on at the summit of the Soviet power structure is not a "political" one in our sense of the word. It is not a fight such as the Dewey and Taft wings of the Republican party wage every four years at convention time. In the Soviet Union every "political" decision has an immediate "economic" impact because the economic structure and the political structure are fused, inseparable. The relationship is nearly direct, while in America it is very indirect.

Therefore the political struggle on top will, when it unfolds, quickly assume a socio-



economic form. Issues of vital importance to the entire system will immediately become involved. The "program" on which Stalin came to power in the 1920's was one to strengthen the party and internal bureaucracy, and intensify its monolithic character. But today the nation is entirely totalitarianized; to come out in favor of tightened controls would not distinguish any group or clique from all the rest. An "opposition" today, therefore, can gain popularity only by demanding a contrary course, by hinting that it might loosen the structure, "liberalize" it.

Such a clique would not, of course, call for immediate freedom of speech, the right of political organization, or anything of the sort. It would only hint, subtly and cautiously, that a certain easing up might result from its victory. Certain officials, with support from Politburo members, would identify themselves with the "liberalizing" tendency. This is where the battle would begin; slowly sections of the bureaucracy would begin to line up on one side and the other. Gradually, the struggle would reach into the lower depths of the bureaucracy itself, initially in the most covert forms.

But eventually the warring groups would begin to appeal to sections of the disfranchised public too. The possibilities at such

a juncture are unlimited. Once the various cliques begin to battle each other for the favor of the masses, a new stage will be reached in the history of Soviet Communism. And it will be its last stage, for the totalitarian structure cannot withstand such a struggle for long. As soon as its existence becomes dependent upon the voluntary support of large masses of the citizenry, it is doomed. Like its predecessor, the czarist regime, it is not built for compromise. The contending cliques may then be obliged to close ranks and fight for their very survival as a class. This class would then need that "successor" to Stalin which its own internal divisions had made impossible. But by that time, would it not be too late?

The very bureaucratization of the Soviet system which makes it impossible for a successor to Stalin to arise, gives the system a certain inertia and stability that may well prevent open conflicts from breaking out for a long time to come.

In closing, we should like to emphasize again that these developments are not in the immediate offing; whether they will take five years or ten or more we do not know. Our only belief is that Stalin's death hastens their advent immeasurably, for Stalin was indispensable to the system he built and presided over for so long.